

~~TOP SECRET~~  
SENSITIVE

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

19 March 1966

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: PROBABLE REACTIONS TO A PROPOSED US COURSE OF ACTION

NOTE

This paper estimates probable reactions, particularly by the DRV, Communist China, and the USSR to the bombing program against North Vietnam proposed in "The Role of Airstrikes in Attaining US Objectives in North Vietnam," SC No. 0828/66, of March 1966.

The proposed bombing program consists of two phases:

PHASE I Calls for the bombing of a number of selected fixed targets: POL facilities, the cement plant, military facilities, and prime targets on the LOCs. It also includes mining the major harbors. This phase is to be quick and intensive. It could be completed in two or three weeks, perhaps substantially less.

GROUP I  
Excluded from automatic  
downgrading and  
declassification

~~TOP SECRET~~  
SENSITIVE

PHASE II consists of sustained armed reconnaissance on the  
LOC's and restrikes as needed on the fixed targets.  
This is to be continued as long as required. It is  
assumed that US/Allied military pressure on Communist  
forces in the South would continue to increase.

This paper first considers reactions to PHASE I -- things that  
could happen quickly. It then considers the effects of PHASE II --  
the cumulative impact of continued pressure from the bombing program  
in the North and US/Allied military action in the South.

- 2 -

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T  
SENSITIVE

~~T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T~~  
SENSITIVE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Old #1

II. REACTIONS TO PHASE I

A. The DRV

2. Impact (include discussion of sortie levels):
  - a. Inflict physical damage and disrupt the economy;
  - b. Not force reduction of present levels of support to the South;
  - c. Would set ceiling of sorts on capability to expand that support;
  - d. Increase dependence on CC and USSR;
  - e. Have some impact on will;
  - f. Maximum compression of attacks would reduce time for enemy to react and increase danger enemy would think "this is it" and react accordingly.
- 3.)
- 4.) Old #s 3, 4, 5, modified
- 5.)
6. If decides to carry on, what can it do:
  - a. Already has made preparation;
  - b. Resort to coastal shipping, primitive transport, etc.

- 3 -

~~T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T~~  
SENSITIVE

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T  
SENSITIVE

- c. Call on USSR and CC for aid;
- d. Political and propaganda maneuvers;

7 & 8. Air aspects:

- a. Use own fighters? Prob.
- b. What capabilities?
- c. If US destroys in the air, seek replacements;
- d. (If US decides not to hit airfields, it can  
destroy only those aircraft the DRV chooses to  
commit.);
- d. If US destroys airfields as well, surviving aircraft  
probably flee to China;
- e. What then? (See China section.)

B. Communist China

- 9. Old #8.
- 10. Most likely reaction; decide to send more logistic  
support, replacements and repair, and AAA units.  
Could not supply missiles or many MIG-21s.
- 11-13. Possibilities of Air War:
  - a. We think Chinese recognize this would put their  
weakness against our strength. Infantry manpower  
is where they see their advantage.

- 4 -

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T  
SENSITIVE

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T  
SENSITIVE

- b. If DRV lost own aircraft and asked for more, chances better than even CC would respond. Likelihood lowered a little if CC pilots also needed.
  - c. If also DRV airfields knocked out and surviving DRVAF flies to Chinese fields, CC could supply additional aircraft and let DRVAF operate over North Vietnam. We think unlikely.
  - d. CC could use own AF to defend over N. Vietnam. We think unlikely (use thoughts from old #13). However, CC might try cautious testing to see whether China would be treated as sanctuary as in Korean war.
  - e. Possibility of accidental clash (old #10a.).
14. Possibility of Naval response;
15. Chinese ground intervention unlikely because:
- a. (para 10, above);
  - b. inappropriateness, i.e., infantry to stop air war;
  - c. limited capabilities, further lowered by bombing program.

- 5 -

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T  
SENSITIVE

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T  
SENSITIVE

C. The USSR

16-17. (Old #s 15 & 16, modified and expanded).

D. Non-Communist World

18-19. (Old #s 2 and 18, modified).

III. PHASE II

20. Point out this applicable only if reactions to  
PHASE I followed what we think the more likely  
course.

A. DRV

21-22. (Old #7, amplified.)

B. Communist China

23-25. (Old #s 12, 11 & 13.)

C. USSR<sup>1</sup><sub>2</sub>

26. (Old #17.)

D. Non-Communist World

27. Would settle down.

- 6 -

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T  
SENSITIVE

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T  
SENSITIVE

INFORMATION NEEDED

1. DRV air OB.

DRV airfields (perhaps graphic in yesterday's CIB)

Does DRVAF have air-to-air missiles? How good?

2. Basic general figures on Communist China OB, probably as chart for appendix.

Number and status of MIG-21s (all weather?) and MIG-19s.

Air-to-air missiles?

Adequacy of Communist China's jet fuel supply for sustained operations. (over)

Map showing South China airfields.

Number and status of CC subs and MTBs.

3. Capability of DRV, CC, and Soviets to clear mines from DRV harbors. What would be involved?

Naval fleets (over)

over

over

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T  
SENSITIVE